

From the Editor-in-Chief

SIC TRANSIT GLORIA MUNDI". WHILST I WAS pondering how to introduce this current issue, two items brought the opening epithet to mind. As is now well established, we prefer English rather than Latin words, but I am not averse to citing the occasional quotation, if only to establish my literary pedigree. I was surprised, however, to discover that this particular quote came from the first book of "Imitatio Christi", written by Thomas a Kempis, who lived, according to my "Concise Oxford Dictionary of Quotations", from 1380 through 1471. The phrase is translated in my dictionary as "O, how quickly doth the glory of the world pass away".

The first happening that brought to mind the citation occurred during the recent meeting of the London Intervention Group. This gathering, which meets three times each year, once at each of the tertiary centres in London, is designed to provide an educational programme in interventional procedures for our specialist registrars and fellows in training. The latest meeting, held at Guy's Hospital, addressed interventional closure of the arterial duct. After a morphological introduction, Michael Tynan gave a wonderful overview of the history of the arterial duct, starting with the work of Botalli, moving through the contributions of Maurice Campbell, Porstmann, and Rashkind, to finish with Kurt Amplatz and his occluder. During his talk, he also discussed the background to Alexander Gibson's classical description of the "machinery murmur" generated by the persistently patent duct. I have no wish to steal his thunder, since his discoveries relating to this oft-quoted description surprised us all. It seemed to me that his findings deserved a wider audience than the London Intervention Group, so he has agreed to package these revelations as an historical vignette, which, all being well, will appear in the next issue of the Journal.

The next happening that brought to mind the writings of Thomas a Kempis was very sad. I learnt last week that, on May 24, 2003, Gerry Brom died at the age of 88. His funeral was held on May 30, and in addition to the reminiscences from his family members, orations were given by Jan Quaegebeur, one of

his eminent previous pupils and surgical apprentices, and Alain Carpentier, one of Gerry's long-standing collaborators. Gerry was elegant, civilised, and an outstanding surgeon and pedagogue. Born in Holland, where he practised surgery for most of his life, he spoke most European languages without the hint of an inappropriate accent. My good friend Jane Somerville attended his funeral with family friends and a small gathering of his scientific and medical colleagues. It was, she said, a moving and stylish occasion, with a memorable moment for all who attended. Afterwards, she continued on from Wassenaar, where the funeral was held, to Amsterdam to attend the annual meeting of the Association for European Paediatric Cardiology. She was surprised that none of those to whom she spoke were aware of his death, and moreover had only sketchy knowledge of his considerable achievements. Hence the thought of the opening epigram, since it also occurred to me that most of those attending the meeting in Amsterdam would have known of the huge contributions made by Gerry, his colleagues at Leiden, and his close collaborators in Bordeaux, Paris, Bergamo, and Birmingham, Alabama, during the development of modern-day paediatric cardiac surgery. So as to chronicle all Gerry's achievements, not only in the field of paediatric but also adult cardiac surgery, I will publish an appropriate obituary in a future issue of the Journal.

The two items together have emphasised for me that, although paediatric cardiology is such a young specialty, we forget too quickly the contributions of those who established the field. I have been fortunate to be able to rub shoulders with most of the pioneers of the specialty during its development. It was to preserve this living history that we have established our series in which the giants of our field are enshrined in the "Paediatric Cardiology Hall of Fame". Gerry Brom was such a giant of cardiac surgery, and a true gentleman.

Robert H. Anderson
Editor-in-Chief